

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7314

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 0478

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SUBJ: PRESS COMMENT ON JAMES W. HARGROVE

FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE BULLETIN DATED JANUARY 24, 1976, TITLE "HARGROVE, THE MODEST AMERICAN", BY GEORGE MCGANN:

QTE JAMES HARGROVE SAYS THAT MODESTY PREVENTS HIM FROM SAYING WHY THE WHITE HOUSE HAS NOMINATED HIM TO BE THE NEXT U.S. AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRALIA. ON THE RECORD, HE HAS MUCH TO BE MODEST ABOUT.

QTE HARGROVE IS A BUSINESSMAN FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS, WITH NO EXPERIENCE WHATEVER IN DIPLOMACY. HARGROVE, AT 53, IS NINE-TENTHS AN OIL-ORIENTED BUSINESSMAN AND ONE-TENTH A POST OFFICE OFFICIAL.

QTE AFTER GRADUATING FROM RICE UNIVERSITY, HOUSTON, WITH (OF ALL THINGS) A BA DEGREE WITH A MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY, AND SERVING IN EUROPE WITH U.S. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DURING WORLD WAR TWO, HARGROVE IN 1947 JOINED THE TEXAS EASTERN TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, A NATURAL GAS PIPELINE COMPANY. HE STAYED THERE TILL 1969, WHEN HE STARTED THREE YEARS AS ASSISTANT POSTMASTER-GENERAL IN WASHINGTON, IN 1972 HE RETURNED TO PRIVATE BUSINESS IN HOUSTON AS A FINANCIAL CONSULTANT.

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QTE HE READILY ACKNOWLEDGES THE OBVIOUS, THAT HIS EXPERIENCE

OF DIPLOMACY IS NON-EXISTENT, BUT SAYS THAT HIS BUSINESS EXPERIENCE WILL BE VERY USEFUL AND THAT DIPLOMACY WON'T BE NEEDED AT ALL.

QTE WHAT EXPERTISE WOULD HE BRING TO THE JOB? INNER QUOTE WELL, I BRING A LOT OF ENERGY AND A LOT OF DESIRE TO DO A GOOD JOB. I BELIEVE A GREAT MANY OF THE MATTERS WITH WHICH WE WILL BE DEALING WILL BE ECONOMIC OR BUSINESS RELATED, AND THAT'S MY EXPERIENCE...

QTE I DOUBT THAT I WILL BE CALLED UPON TO DO ANY DELICATE DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS. AS FAR AS I KNOW, WE (THE U.S. AND AUSTRALIA) DON'T HAVE ANY DIPLOMATIC PROBLEMS. END INNER QUOTE

QTE SO THE BUSINESSMAN WOULD BE THE DIPLOMAT, NOT BY A CHANGE OF FUNCTION, BUT BY THE CHANGE OF DEFINITION.

QTE WAS THERE, HOWEVER, A DANGER OF U.S. AMBASSADORS (ESPECIALLY AMBASSADORS WITH WHOLLY BUSINESS BACKGROUNDS) GETTING TOO CLOSE TO U.S. COMMERCIAL INTERESTS AND COMING TO BE SEEN AS REPRESENTING CORPORATIONS RATHER THAN THE COMMONWEALTH, GENERAL MOTORS RATHER THAN THE GENERAL GOOD?

QTE INNER QUOTE THE FUNCTION OF THE AMBASSADOR IS TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS CITIZENS.

QTE THOSE CITIZENS OF THE U.S., WHETHER INDIVIDUAL OR CORPORATE, WHO HAVE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS IN AUSTRALIA I THINK SHOULD BE REPRESENTED BY THE AMBASSADOR.

QTE THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT I SHOULD CONTRACT FOR THEM AT ALL, BUT I SHOULD SIMPLY SEE THAT THEY GET THE THINGS THAT A CITIZEN OPERATING IN A LEGITIMATE WAY MIGHT EXPECT. AND I DON'T ANTICIPATE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN THAT RESPECT. END INNER QUOTE

QTE HARGROVE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT BETWEEN CORPORATE INTERESTS AND THE UNITED STATES' NATIONAL INTEREST, AT LEAST IN THE THEORETICAL SENSE THAT WHAT WAS GOOD FOR GENERAL MOTORS DID NOT INEVITABLY TURN OUT TO BE EQUALLY GOOD FOR THE WHOLE USA. INNER QUOTE OH I AM UNCLASSIFIED

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SURE THERE CERTAINLY COULD BE THAT (CONFLICT) YES, BUT I WILL NOT BY ANY MEANS BE REPRESENTING ANY PARTICULAR COMPANY, END INNER QUOTE

QTE OPERATING AS A HOUSTON-BASED CONSULTANT WITH INTERESTS IN THE OIL INDUSTRY GIVES A MAN A CERTAIN SENSITIVITY IN THESE DAYS OF RESENTMENT OVER HIGH PETROL PRICES AND POPULIST EMOTION AGAINST THE OIL CORPORATIONS. MR. HARGROVE IS NO

FLAMBOYANT TEXAS HEAVY. AS A MATTER OF PERSONAL STYLE, HE IS
QUITE CAPABLE -- IN SHARP CONTRAST TO HIS OLD FRIEND, ED
CLARK, THE TEXAN WHO WENT TO CANBERRA FOR LYNDON JOHNSON --
OF ADOPTING A PROFILE LOWER THAN A RATTLESNAKE'S BELLY.

QTE THE LOW PROFILE:

QTE WHAT DOES THE U.S. REALLY WANT FROM AUSTRALIA IN THE
INDIAN OCEAN?

QTE INNER QUOTE I DON'T KNOW THAT THERE'S ANYTHING THAT THE
UNITED STATES WANTS FROM AUSTRALIA IN THIS RESPECT. BUT I
WOULDN'T WANT TO BE PRESUMPTUOUS IN ANSWERING THE QUESTION
BEFORE THE SENATE TAKES UP MY CONFIRMATION. I HAVEN'T BEEN
FULLY BRIEFED ON IT. AS FAR AS I UNDERSTAND THERE'S NOTHING
THAT WE ARE PARTICULARLY ASKING FOR FROM AUSTRALIA (CONCERNING
THE U.S.-SOVIET RIVALRY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN). BUT WE WOULD
LIKE TO HAVE THEM AGREE WITH US THAT IT WAS AN IMPORTANT THING.
END INNER QUOTE.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7315

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QTE THERE IS NO OUTSTANDING ISSUE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND
AUSTRALIA?

QTE INNER QUOTE THERE'S NONE THAT I KNOW OF, BUT I KEEP PLEAD-
ING SOME DEGREE OF IGNORANCE ON THIS. I HAVEN'T BEEN FULLY
BRIEFED. END INNER QUOTE

QTE THE EVEN LOWER PROFILE:

QTE DOES THE UNITED STATES NEED AN OFFICIAL OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ATTACHED TO ITS EMBASSY IN CANBERRA?

QTE INNER QUOTE WELL I'M NOT CAPABLE OF ANSWERING THAT QUESTION YET. I HAVEN'T BEEN BRIEFED FULLY AND I DON'T REALLY HAVE AN OPINION ON IT. END INNER QUOTE

QTE GIVEN THE DESIRE IN CANBERRA TO ROCK NO DIPLOMATIC BOATS OF THE U.S., IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE MOST SENSITIVE QUESTION WITH WHICH HARGROVE WILL HAVE TO COPE WILL BE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS OWN APPOINTMENT -- HIS TOTAL LACK OF DIPLOMATIC EXPERIENCE, IN PREPARATION FOR THE AMBASSADORIAL JOB WHICH IS, FOR AUSTRALIA, THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT IN THE WORLD (THE FIRST BEING THAT FILLED BY THE AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.). NOR DOES HE BRING ANY CLOSE PRESIDENTIAL CONNECTION TO THE ANTIPODES, AS CLARK DID WITH PRESIDENT JOHNSON.

QTE SO WHY DID THE WHITE HOUSE WANT HIM TO GO?

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QTE INNER QUOTE AS FAR AS I KNOW THIS WAS A RESULT OF RECRUITING ACTION FOR WHAT THEY HOPED WOULD BE THE VERY BEST PERSON AVAILABLE, THE VERY BEST PERSON WHO MIGHT GO TO AUSTRALIA, ON THE PART OF THE WHITE HOUSE PERSONNEL OPERATION.

QTE I HESITATE TO SAY THAT MODESTY PREVENTS ME FROM ANSWERING YOUR QUESTION FULLY -- I HESITATE TO SAY MORE THAN THAT BUT I CERTAINLY EXPECT TO DO A CREDITABLE JOB FOR THEM. END INNER QUOTE

QTE IN EXPLAINING WHY HE ACCEPTED THE OFFER OF THE AMBASSADORSHIP WHEN THE WHITE HOUSE APPROACHED HIM LAST OCTOBER, HARGROVE SOUNDS LIKE A HEDONIST ANTICIPATING A LONG, WARM HOLIDAY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC SUM.

QTE INNER QUOTE I ACCEPTED BECAUSE IT SOUNDED LIKE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOME THINGS I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT WOULD BE FUN. I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE A VERY PLEASANT EXPERIENCE... AND ALSO A VERY INTERESTING AND CHALLENGE ONE, END INNER QUOTE HE ADDS.

QTE HE'S ANXIOUS TO GET TO AUSTRALIA QUICKLY -- INNER QUOTE AS SOON AS THE SENATE CONFIRMS ME, IF IN FACT THEY DO, WHICH I DON'T KNOW ANY REASON WHY THEY SHOULDN'T. THE STATE DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO SEE HARGROVE IN CANBERRA BY FEBRUARY WITH HIS WIFE, MARION, AND FOUR CHILDREN, AND STATE EXPECTS THE SENATE TO CONFIRM PRESIDENT FORD'S CHOICE WITHOUT CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

QTE NEITHER HARGROVE, THE STATE DEPARTMENT NOR ANY OF THE 100

U.S. SENATORS ARE APPROACHING THE CONFIRMATION HEARING WITH ANY TAUT SENSE OF ANTICIPATION. THIS IS A ROUTINE APPOINTMENT, AND ROUTINE CONFIRMATION BY THE SENATE SHOULD FOLLOW.

QTE HARGROVE, AS HE MUST, DENIES THAT HIS APPOINTMENT TO FOLLOW THE ABLE AND EXPERIENCED MARSHALL GREEN IS EVIDENCE THAT AUSTRALIA IS SLIPPING DOWN THE LIST OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES. INNER QUOTE FROM EVERYTHING I HAVE HEARD, THE OFFICIALS I HAVE TALKED TO, AUSTRALIA'S A VERY IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, END INNER QUOTE HE SAID. BUT IT HAS NOT YET BECOME U.S. POLICY TO SEND DIPLOMATIS DEVOID OF EXPERIENCE TO IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT DIPLOMATIC UNCLASSIFIED

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